

Minutes
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters
September 8, 2025

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met on September 8, 2025. The meeting was convened by the Chair in Center Court at 95 Washington Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Those in attendance: Judge Leo Diana (Chair); Attorney Bryan Cafferelli; Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly; Ms. Rachel Boucher, Clinical Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Ms. Barbara Cass, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner for Long Term Care, Department of Public Health

Absent: Judge Jennifer Macierowski; Attorney Renee Cimino (designated by the Chief Public Defender); Attorney Edward Bryan; Attorney Nisa Khan

Also in attendance were Attorney Grace Palo, Assistant Bar Counsel; Attorney Damon Goldstein and Ms. Nicole Collins from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 PM by Judge Diana.

I. Review and Approval of the Minutes

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Rachel Boucher to approve the minutes from the meeting held on June 2, 2025. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote with Bryan Cafferelli abstaining and four members absent.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

At 2:06 PM, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6), Bryan Cafferelli moved, and Justine Rakich-Kelly seconded, to enter executive session to discuss complaints for removal of guardians ad litem. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with four members absent. Judge Diana recused himself from the executive session and left Center Court for the discussion of complaint #25-0003. Upon completion of the discussion of the complaint, Judge Diana rejoined the executive session for the discussion of the remaining complaints.

A motion was made by Bryan Cafferelli and seconded by Rachel Boucher to conclude the executive session. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with four members absent. The Committee reconvened in open session at 2:22 PM.

a. Complaint #25-0003

A motion was made by Rachel Boucher and seconded by Bryan Cafferelli to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 3-0 vote with Judge Diana and Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and four members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

b. Complaint #25-0004

A motion was made by Bryan Cafferelli and seconded by Rachel Boucher to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with four members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

c. Complaint #25-0006

A motion was made by Bryan Cafferelli and seconded by Rachel Boucher to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with four members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

III. Changes to the Active List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

a. Attorney Kathryn Bissonnette

Attorney Bissonnette was removed from the active list in January 2018 because the committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Bissonnette emailed a request to be reinstated on the active list on June 25, 2025. Attorney Bissonnette meets all requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Justine Rakich-Kelly moved and Barabara Cass seconded, that Attorney Bissonnette be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 5-0 vote with four members absent.

b. Attorney Heidi Opinsky

Attorney Opinsky was removed from the active list in January 2022 because the committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Opinsky emailed a request to be reinstated on the active list on August 25, 2025. Attorney Opinsky meets all requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Justine Rakich-Kelly moved and Judge Diana seconded, that Attorney Opinsky be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 5-0 vote with four members absent.

IV. Review and Possible Revisions to the Procedures by Which an Individual May be Removed from the List of Those Deemed Eligible for Appointment as a Guardian Ad Litem or Attorney for the Minor Child in Family Matters

This agenda item was tabled and will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting.

V. Practice Book Rule 25-62(b)(3) Effective January 1, 2026

Damon Goldstein reminded the Committee members of the new Practice Book Rule 25-62(b)(3) that takes effect on January 1, 2026. The rule permits mental health professionals, not already named in Section 25-62(b)(1), who are licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and in good standing, to submit an application for consideration by this Committee requesting to be able to serve as a guardian ad litem in family matters. The proponent of the rule submitted an email inquiring about the process to be followed once the rule takes effect. Barbara Cass offered to provide the members of the Committee with the Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) application as a reference, which the Committee agreed may be helpful in guiding discussion on the protocol.

VI. GAL/AMC Application and Annual Review Process

The agenda item was tabled and will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting.

VII. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters will be held on Monday, November 10, 2025 at 2:00 PM.

VIII. Such Other Matters as may Properly Come Before the Standing Committee

Andrew Bachman, a member of the public, inquired if he would be able to address the members of the Committee. Judge Diana granted Mr. Bachman permission to address the Committee. Mr. Bachman expressed his support for the new Practice Book Rule 25-62(b)(3) that will take effect January 1, 2026.

Bryan Cafferelli moved, and Justine Rakich-Kelly seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by a 5-0 vote with four members absent. Judge Diana adjourned the meeting at 2:53 PM.